What did the Anabaptists teach on baptism?

Posted on June 21, 2012 by Dr. John Oakes
wrote in Church History, General.

Question:

I have been wondering about the Anabaptists. To your knowledge, did any of them teach a thorough biblical baptism?

Answer:

The Anabaptists were a back-to-the Bible offshoot of the Reformation which came from the Ulrich Zwingli wing of the movement. What made them differ from other "Protestants" was that they were committed to separation of Church and State and they believed in adult conversion. They taught that the individual conscience should determine one's religious affiliation. They denied the radical predestination of Zwingli, believing, instead, in personal decision for holiness. Most important to your question, the Anabaptists taught that infant baptism was not valid, as faith is required before baptism. Whether or not they taught baptismal regeneration is debated. Perhaps we can say that they were less clear on this and there may have been a range of beliefs in this area among anabaptists. The word anabaptist means rebaptists. They were so-called because they demanded that members who were baptized as infants must be "rebaptized. Below is a short set of notes I have used on the Anabaptist movement. There are a number of anabaptist groups still around today, including the Hutterites, the Amish and the Mennonites. You might be surprised to learn that some of these people teach a "plan of salvation" similar to the one you believe in.

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I hope this helps.

John Oakes

The Anabaptist (rebaptizer) movement. 1525 and later. Also known as the Radical Reformation. Immersion of adults after repentance and confession of faith. Bible only authority. Separation of church and state. Accused their enemies (the magisterial Reformation) quite rightly of being Constantinians/Augustinians.

Taught synergism, not monergism (God and man cooperate in salvation) Taught “prevenient grace.”

Viciously persecuted. Zwingli personally approved the drowning of Felix Manz. Burned at stake by Catholics, drowning by Lutherans and Calvinists.

It is hard to exaggerate the significance of separation of church and state. Extreme pacifists.

Their ideal: To restore 1st century NT Christianity.

First theologian of the Anabaptists: Balthasar Hubmaier. Burned at stake 1528, his wife drowned in the Danube.

Jacob Hutter Hutterites. Very schismatic.

Menno Simons → Mennonites became legalistic and overly emphasized asceticism and separation from the “world.”

Swiss Anabaptists became the Amish

Anabaptists chose to remove themselves from the world rather than to influence it.

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